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Back Cover: Sugaring Off

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Sugaring Off

Peels of papery white
cling to the birch tree trunks
as we tamp over frosted moss
and find the tapped trees
in the sugar-bush.

It is *sugaring off* time now,
the March sun stark and bright
on the lichen rocks
and traces of snow crust.

The kids scream from the hills
this bucket is full again!
and *this one already too!*

Their arms ache from bearing heavy tin pails
and chopping wood for the smoking fire.
Poppa is stiff and smiling
from carrying sap buckets in the melting snow
with arthritic joints,
never complaining.

Salve of golden
maple syrup to sweeten the soreness.
Alchemy of boiled sugar
bliss.

— *Kate Marshall Flaherty*
Lay Spiritan